

WILLIAM THORNBOROUGH,

T H E

BENEVOLENT QUIXOTE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

There, to the sympathetic heart
Life's best delights belong ;
To mitigate the mourner's smart,
To guard the weak from wrong.
Ye sons of luxury, be wise ;
Know, happiness for ever flies
The cold and solitary breast ;
Then let the social instinct glow,
And learn to feel another's woe,
And in his joy be blest.

BEATTIE.

L O N D O N :

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BENEVOLENT QUIXOTE.

CHAP. I.

“INDEED, my dear sir, I must again repeat, I am ashamed to acknowledge the extreme folly of my past conduct; yet to your candour I submit myself, assured I shall not find you a harsh judge. The anxiety I suffered on my brother's account first convinced me of the inefficacy of my favourite pursuits in calming a disturbed mind; and

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the book I met with at your house taught me, that the method of acquiring real happiness is to contribute to that of others. Full of this idea, which promised me not only variety, but relief, I formed a new plan of life, which the death of poor George for a while interrupted : but, when the first extremity of grief was abated, it returned with double force ; and I resolved, like another Quixote, to ramble through the world in search of adventures. But fancying my usual mode of living would prevent me from knowing the distresses of common life, I resolved to travel without a servant, that I might be more at liberty, and more in the way of assisting those whose misfortunes are too often concealed from the public eye,

eye, by appearing in the middle rank of life. But my precautions availed me little; and in my three first adventures I suffered for the folly of obtruding my advice, and engaging in the affairs of others, without a sufficient knowledge of them. In the fourth I was more successful; and I hope I may there flatter myself with having relieved merit from distress, and secured the happiness of two worthy people.

“ New to the world, and without a guide to direct me in its intricate mazes, it was no wonder I erred: and, on my arrival in London, I was so disgusted with the respect and attention which nothing but rank and fortune

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could ensure, that I almost wished myself divested of both: and communicating this wish to a friend, he took that advantage of it which has been the source of all my past sufferings."

He then gave him a concise relation of his different adventures, and concluded with his real attachment to miss Barrymore, which though he had long felt in some degree, it was but lately he discovered it. "And now, my dear sir," added he, "favour me with your advice how to avoid the difficulties in which my precipitate engagement has involved me."

Mr. Fitzwilliam, who, from his dejection,

jection, and what had passed at their first meeting in the street, concluded he had been hurried, by bad advice and bad company, into all the vices and all the follies of the age; that his fortune was dissipated, and his morals corrupted; though, from the air of penitence he fancied he wore, he hoped not wholly vitiated; and expected to hear a long catalogue of misfortunes, which are the natural consequences of vice, was delighted and surprised at a recital which proved him more than ever worthy his affection and regard; and rejoiced, with all the sincerity of friendship, at the conviction that his estate was unimpaired, his heart as unchanged as his morals, and his virtues now called into action, such as he had ever

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hoped they would be. He extended his hand to our hero, and shaking his heartily, replied,

“ Perish, my dear lad, that narrow-souled suspicion which enables us in early youth to avoid deceit and unfaithfulness. Caution is the consequence of experience, and experience only the fruit of years and wisdom. Unhackneyed as you were in the ways of the world, I wonder not that you met with imposition : but, however dearly you have paid for your knowledge, it may be, well applied, in future of infinite benefit; and even now, in fact, it must afford you, on recollection, more of pleasure than pain. Ridiculous as were your situations frequently, yet the good
you

you have done is not trivial. Mr. Harford's release from his unprincipled mistress, was the first cause of miss Ellis's present happiness and his own : and even young Fennel's marriage, though an event that appeared at first rather the consequence of compulsion than choice ; yet in all probability it saved the poor girl from destruction : for, madly attached as she was, it is too probable she would have left her father the first opportunity, without considering the loss of her reputation and peace. Your bounty will, I hope, secure his good behaviour ; and thus she is rendered more happy than she could have expected. Your breaking into miss Darley's chamber, was the leading step to your saving her from that ruin which a pretty girl in a strolling

company, without a friend or relation, could scarcely escape. Nor can I even consider your late adventures at B— as wholly unfortunate: they have taught you not to rely upon appearances, nor to trust entirely every plausible acquaintance. It has also (will you not think this a good argument?) been the means of introducing you to your beloved miss Barrymore, whom, but for this, you might never have known, and with whom I still hope you may be happy, in spite of the apparent difficulties. The Wildings, except Charlotte, are a despicable family, and Godfrey a rascal: but the advice that young lady gave you was excellent, and proved her understanding as good as her heart. He is beneath your resentment; and your life,

life, as she said, is too valuable to be risked for a villain. The Barrymores I have long known; and will, on their return, myself undertake to clear your character to them in every respect. All that now remains is, to endeavour to be released from your promise to Letitia, which I cannot suppose you will long be tied by; as I doubt not but her plan of settling in the world will induce her to accept the first offer. The most perplexing affair is your young protégée; yet, in time, I dare aver she will be claimed; or, if not, your fortune will not feel her education, nor a decent provision, which is all that can be expected of you."

"Do not, sir," interrupted our hero,

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"think

“ think so meanly of me, as to imagine I wish to part with the child on account of the expences I may incur : it is merely from a fear of not acquitting myself as I ought, and from my regret, that there exists such a disgrace to human nature as her who consigned her to me.”

“ No,” returned Mr. Fitzwilliam, “ I cannot doubt your generosity ; you have given too many proofs of it. But now let me caution you a little for the future : when distress falls in your way, relieve it, let it be of whatever kind it may ; and as your estate can well afford it, let not your charity be always checked by the rigid hand of propriety ; for, if we give only to the
truly

truly deserving, how few are there who can claim relief! and how many who make the fear of bestowing upon the unworthy a plea for never giving at all! But turn not aside to investigate imaginary distresses, or you will often be led into error by the duplicity of those whose interest it is to deceive you. But remember, my young friend, this last maxim is addressed solely to yourself, and is only requisite from the peculiar turn of your character; it is not my general opinion, nor the advice I would give to the bulk of mankind, whose cold unfeeling apathy requires a spur to the actions of benevolence, not a curb to restrain them. But your liberal heart, ardent animated spirit, and the indiscriminating warmth of your temper,

which blinds your judgment, should have a slight check; and I doubt not but, in future, the experience you have already had will teach you as much caution as I ever wish you to learn."

Mr. Fitzwilliam here ended his lecture, for which he received the sincerest thanks of our hero, and particularly for his promised interference with respect to the Barrymores. That gentleman then requested he would not carry his delicacy so far as to let his own character suffer in compliment to the Wildings; but, if obliged to account for the change of his name, avow the whole story, as to conceal it in part would only give him the appearance of duplicity.

Mr.

Mr. Thornborough promised to follow his advice in this respect, as he would in every other ; and then mentioned his determination of travelling through some parts of England, by way of amusing his mind, and filling up the time till the Barrymores returned, of which event Mr. Fitzwilliam was to give him the earliest intelligence. He made the less objection to this plan, as he had promised to follow his lady and daughter into Kent in a few days, where they were to remain some weeks : but he insisted on his young friend's continuing with him till his departure, which he readily consented to.

During his stay in London, all the time he could spare from Mr. Fitzwilliam

william was devoted to those he had formerly known, be their rank what it would. His first visit was to Mrs. Bennet, in Cecil-street, from whom he learned that his respected and venerable friend, Mrs. Mason, still continued in good health : but this intelligence, acceptable as it was, scarcely gave him more satisfaction than that he felt at hearing his solicitude for miss Darley had not been ineffectual ; but that, thoroughly mortified by the bookseller, and as much terrified by the manager's wife, she had given up her theatrical and literary pursuits, and was now gone to Norwich as an assistant to a capital mantua-maker, with whom, in a few years, she was to be in partnership.

From

From thence he went to fir John Moleſworth's, where he was welcomed with unfeigned ſatisfaction by all the family who were at home; as the two younger ladies, Louiſa and Clementina, were with their aunt Harford; a circumſtance at this time which gave no little ſatisfaction to the eldeſt, who, in point of beauty, was conſiderably their inferior; as ſhe now hoped to engroſs our hero in his frequent viſits, without a rival. But great was her diſappointment when told of his intention of leaving town almoſt immediately; nor was lady Moleſworth much leſs diſconcerted. Sir John, with unaffected good humour, thanked him for promoting the happineſs of one of his family, and added, “ You would ſcarcely, Mr. Thornborough,

borough, know Mr. Harford, he is so much improved in his appearance, and has acquired some refinement, without losing his sincerity. I believe my girls have laughed him out of some of his singularities; and Kitty, of whom he is really very fond, has effected the rest."

After some more conversation on the subject, our hero would have taken leave, but the entrance of Mr. Conway prevented him. "Ah, my dear friend," cried he, running up to him, "what an unexpected pleasure is this! How long have you been in town? and where have you kept yourself these hundred years? Come, you shall go home with me to dinner. I will positively take no denial. I have a small party, the duke of D—
and

and lord B—, colonel S—, Mr. M—, and your old acquaintance Mr. Montague, who wishes to see you ; and I have promised lord B— to introduce you the first opportunity. He is a virtuoso, purchased half the duchess of P—'s museum, and wants your opinion on some non-descripts he has lately met with, and a vase from Herculaneum." Here he paused, waiting for a reply.

" I am much obliged to you," said our hero, smiling at his vehemence and loquacity ; " but you must excuse me : I am engaged to Mr. Fitzwilliam."

" What, Fitzwilliam of Beech Park ?
Nay, he can come too : I will call on him ; and I am sure he will not refuse
me,

me, when I tell him how extremely I wish to see you, and that I must introduce you to lord B—.”

Mr. Thornborough could make no objection to this ; but consented in silence, only saying he hoped lord B— would not consider him as a judge, as he had long given up the study.

They went together to Mortimer-street ; and as they were walking, “Apropos, my good friend,” said Mr. Conway, “I had a letter from Berkshire this morning, which informs me of the death of Mr. Dennison, rector of——. Now, if the living is not promised, I should be much obliged to you if you will attend to my recommendation of a
proper

proper person to succeed him. Mr. Daventry, my son's late tutor, is a deserving and clever fellow : he will preach you a sermon of Carr's in fourteen minutes and a half, and would make an excellent neighbour in the country : indeed, it was the vicinity of the parsonage to Thornborough Abbey which first induced me to think of him. He sings a good song, dances, hunts, shoots, and plays whist incomparably ; and has more wit than half the university ; and last election in Berkshire made himself very remarkable, by parodying, in favour of government, some popular songs ; and, egad, we nicked opposition. You will see him at dinner, for he is now staying with us."

"I am

“I am forry, Mr. Conway,” returned our hero, “to be obliged to refuse you any request; but the living has been long intended for Mr. Littleton, an intimate friend of my own, and whose attention to my poor brother, during the time he lingered abroad, deserves by far a greater recompence than it is in my power to bestow.”

“Oh,” cried Mr. Conway, visibly chagrined, “if it is promised, I hope you do not, my dear sir, think me capable of wishing to influence you in any degree. I only thought, if you were undetermined, you could not fix on a pleasanter young fellow than Daventry; but as it is, I entreat you will make no
kind

kind of apology, for I am perfectly satisfied."

"And so," thought our hero, "am I;" for he was not particularly struck with the description of Mr. Daventry, nor imagined the qualities his patron ascribed to him were essential to a clergyman, whose life and example have usually some effect upon his congregation; and he had always made it a point of conscience to recommend none to sacred offices, but those whose character and principles might render them an honour to their profession.

C H A P. II.

WHEN they arrived in Mortimer-street, Mr. Fitzwilliam promised to wait on Mr. Conway, more from a wish of amusing our hero than any other motive, as he plainly saw the state of his mind required variety and exertion.

The company at dinner were numerous, but in general of that class of whom it is impossible to give a particular description, as their characters had no leading feature. Lord B— was a sensible and rational young man
of

of fashion ; attached, but not ridiculously so, to the study of antiquities ; and this perhaps had added to the naturally grave turn of his mind. He addressed Mr. Thornborough upon the subject, who replied, he had for some months given up the pursuit which for so many years of his life he had ardently followed, upon the fullest conviction that it engrossed too much of his time and attention, and rendered him improperly careless on every other point.

“ You are,” replied lord B—, “ a single instance, I believe, of a young man so entirely giving up his favourite amusement ; but I commend you for it. As to myself, I am naturally of so
retired

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retired a disposition, and love so little the bustle of the world, though I engage in it occasionally, that but for these pursuits I should actually want employment ; and as I take care neither to injure my fortune, nor seclude myself totally from society, I must confess I think it a study equally rational and pleasant."

" But my disposition," returned our hero, " is so ardent and active, that I could not follow any single pursuit with moderation ; so that the only chance I have for acting rationally is by dividing my attention, and directing it to different objects."

Here their conversation was interrupted by miss Conway, who had been engaged with great part of the company in discussing the rage for private theatres, which now so universally prevailed. She had long endeavoured to persuade her father to build a little theatre at Conway-House, but without effect; and now, having given up that point as hopeless, was solicitous merely to have a few plays acted in their large hall, which was admirably calculated for the purpose; as she fancied her voice and figure, both of which were really striking, would appear to advantage in such a situation. She knew her father's respect for Mr. Thornborough, and believed, if she could obtain his interest, her wish might be complied with.

“ We are talking,” said she to him,
 “ of acting a play : will you take a part,
 Mr. Thornborough ? ”

“ You do me great honour, madam,”
 returned he, “ in this proposal ; but I
 must beg leave to decline it. I have no
 talents for the stage, and have (looking
 at Mr. Fitzwilliam with a smile) found
 it so difficult to support my own charac-
 ter with propriety, that it would be mad-
 ness in me to attempt any other.”

“ Oh,” replied miss Conway, much
 piqued at his refusal, “ as you please,
 sir. Mr. Manningford, you will oblige
 us, I know.”

“ Yes, my dear miss Conway,” cried
 Mr.

Mr. Manningford, who was of a very diminutive stature, "in any character that you shall choose will I exert my abilities; from sir John Falstaff to Alexander the Great."

"And you will equally shine in both," interrupted a Mr. Trefilian; "for your mind is as fit for one, as your body for the other."

A general smile prevailing, Mr. Manningford thought proper to join in it; though it seemed like one of those painful efforts in a school-boy, who has no other alternative than to laugh or cry, and wisely prefers the former.

"No," said miss Lucy, "we will
C 2 have

have no tragedy : give me genteel comedy ; no hideous low stuff, but sentimental pathetic pieces, like False Delicacy, or one half of the Provoked Husband."

"Well," added miss Conway, "I should like that of all things ; and I dare say I could act lady Townly to the life."

"I dare say you could," cried her father.

"And, perhaps," continued she, "Mr. Thornborough might then be prevailed on to perform, I will not say *act* Mr. Manly, as it seems his natural character."

"You

"You flatter me too much," replied our hero, "by the comparison; yet I would actually oblige you, could I persuade myself that lady Grace was not, at least in high life, a fiction of the poet's brain, and that consequently I could not hope to meet with her."

The lady coloured extremely at this answer; but, as she had drawn it upon herself, no one pitied her.

"Well," cried Mr. Manningford, "I would give the world to see miss Conway in lady Townly."

"Would it be the World Well Lost, think you?" asked Mr. Conway.

“ Yes,” returned the other with a bow ; “ for it would be All for Love.”

This gallant compliment restored the smiles to her countenance ; and turning to her father, “ I am sure, sir,” said she, “ you will not refuse me this trifle. We shall have performers sufficient : Mr. Manningford, Mr. Russel, and Mr. Howard have promised me ; my brother can take one part, and among his friends may collect a few more. And for ladies, there are Louisa and Clementina Molesworth, and perhaps Laura, if she has left town by that time ; Emily Lewis, Harriet Selwyn, my sister and myself : so that without Mr. Thornborough’s assistance our company will be complete. Perhaps miss Fitzwilliam will join us.”

“ I thank

"I thank you, miss Conway," said Mr. Fitzwilliam; "but Caroline has not courage enough to enter the lists with so many accomplished females."

"Is there not a little sarcasm lurking in that speech?" whispered Mr. Tresilian.

"Hush," returned the other: "if I said courage when I meant confidence, it was a fortunate mistake, and do not you expose me."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Conway with a sneer, "miss Caroline might take the character of lady Grace to oblige Mr. Thornborough, as he is so *very* apprehensive of not meeting with his equal."

"The worst actresses," returned Mr. Fitzwilliam, purposely overlooking her malice, "are always thrown into that part; and so far it would suit Caroline better than any other."

"I beg your pardon, sir," interrupted Mr. Thornborough, with spirit; "miss Fitzwilliam is so constantly lady Grace in all she says or does, that she would be quite at home in the character: but as she always represents her in private life, she does not require the testimony of public applause, to convince the world how much she deserves it."

"I am tired to death," cried miss Lucy Conway, "of this tedious dissertation."

tation. Pray let us change the subject."

"By no means," said Mr. Howard, "till we have fixed on a play; and let us beg the present company, each to recommend one, and we will determine."

"What say you to Macbeth?" cried Mr. Fitzwilliam.

"Very apropos," returned Mr. Trefilian: "there will be many characters miserably murdered, I believe."

"What do you mean by that insinuation, fir?" reiterated Mr. Howard, fiercely.

“Why, though I am an old man,” replied he archly, “and my heart has now a callus grown on it, which is as impenetrable as steel armour to all the darts of beauty; yet, as old Hardy says, ‘I can foresee’ that many gallant youths will fall a sacrifice to the charms of the ladies on that fatal night; even to those who, dancing round the caldron on the plain of Foris, will conceal their beauty under the high crowned hat; yet their spells will still prevail. But, if Macbeth does not meet with your approbation, what think you of the Rival Queens (bowing to the *miss Conways*), who may then dispute the prize of our little valiant Alexander’s heart (turning to Mr. Manningford), as he has offered to take the character?”

After

After various deliberations, the Mourning Bride was fixed on; and the two young ladies undertook, one to rage in Zara, and the other to weep in Almeria. The part of Leonora they agreed could be easily filled up. Mr. Manningford took Osmyrn; and the other gentlemen not exactly agreeing in their choice, it was resolved to determine some other time, when the reverend Mr. Daven-try, who, though he had been attentively listening, spoke not before, now exclaimed, "What an unhappy dog am I, to be thus excluded from partaking in your amusement by my profession! What a pity it is I could not throw off my fable garb, and join your theatrical squadron!"

“It is a pity indeed,” returned our hero with a bow, “and a great misfortune to the world, that you cannot.”

Mr. Daventry, mistaking it for a compliment, thanked him for the coincidence of his opinion in such grateful terms, that Mr. Fitzwilliam, who alone knew his friend’s meaning, with great difficulty kept his countenance.

Mr. Daventry then continued : “But though I am debarred from exerting my theatrical talents, my poetical ones are unhackled by my profession ; and I hope, ladies, you will not refuse me the honour of writing for you prologues and epilogues, or an occasional address,

or

or verses, on opening the theatre at Conway-House, or any little jeu d'esprit in that way. In short, I hope you will command my abilities in any way they can be serviceable to you."

The young ladies said he was very obliging; and Mrs. Conway soon after rising, and leaving the room with her daughters, the conversation took a political turn, and continued till they were summoned to the drawing-room; and there sitting down to whist almost immediately, nothing farther passed worth relating.

When our hero and his friend returned to Mortimer-street, they talked over the events of the day, which had highly amused

amused them. There are in the world a set of beings extremely worthy in themselves, but who, from a rigid disposition, look with as much disgust on the foibles, as on the vices, of mankind : and as the votaries of folly are almost every where to be met with, they by this means contract an habitual severity of manners, and a degree of misanthropy, which in time grows into a settled moroseness. But Mr. Thornborough was not of this class : though himself strictly moral, and wholly unaffected, he had none of that sour propriety in his composition : but though he held vice in abhorrence, and looked on folly with contempt ; yet he could always be amused with the ridiculous, when it fell in his way, and scrupled not giving vanity or
affectation

affected a lash; whilst he scorned smiling at a personal or mental defect, or at those absurdities which arise from ignorance or error.

Mr. Fitzwilliam was delighted at the alteration a few hours had made in him; and from this justly hoped his intended tour would have all the effect he wished, and restore to him the animation and cheerfulness he once possessed.

C H A P. III.

THE next morning our hero devoted to writing to Mr. Littleton, and in his letter desired him to come over as soon as possible, and take possession of the living which had been long designed for him, and was now vacant. He also mentioned a wish, the compliance with which he fancied his friend would not object to, that he would endeavour to prevail on miss Charlotte Wilding to give him her hand without delay; and adding as a reason, that it was principally his respect for her which had induced

duced him to keep the conduct of her family a secret ; and that, if called upon to declare the cause of his behaviour, he must, in justice to himself, tell the truth ; and in that case should be very happy to know Charlotte's absence would exempt her from the contempt which must unavoidably fall on them. He dwelt very slightly on the circumstances which had happened at B——, as supposing she had informed him ; but gently hinted his regret, that a friend who had long known him should so readily believe his character was totally perverted, and capable of descending to so mean a duplicity ; and concluded his letter with mentioning his own attachment, and his intended tour, and requesting him when he arrived to

go

go to Thornborough Abbey, and remain there till the parsonage-house was fitted up for his reception.

The day but one following being that on which Mr. Fitzwilliam intended to leave town, our hero took leave of him, and set out early in the morning, in his phaeton, on his proposed expedition, attended by one servant on horseback, who now knew him by the name of Thornborough. The chariot, which was only a job, he had paid off, and dismissed his other servants.

As he travelled slowly, from a wish of viewing the country, he was not more than thirty miles from London on the north-west road, when about twelve o'clock

o'clock at noon, on the second day, he overtook Mr. Harrison on horseback. That gentleman expressing great delight at this unexpected meeting, Mr. Thornborough asked him to dine with him at the Sugar Loaf at Dunstable, which they were within a short distance of.

Harrison told him, having now possession of his fortune, he was going to B—— to cut a dash among the girls there ; but that he had promised first to pass a day or two with an old friend of the name of Southill, in that neighbourhood. “ And let me tell you,” added he, “ if you will go with me, I will ensure you a hearty welcome ; for he keeps open house, and any friend of mine he will be particularly glad to see.”

Our

Our hero having before confessed he was travelling with no expedition, but merely for amusement, consented, on the other's repeating his entreaties, to accompany him immediately : but recollecting that, as Mr. Harrison only knew him by the name of Godfrey, a discovery of the truth so immediately before his return to B——, would be a means of sending the story all over the place, and certain that no method could bind him to secrecy, he resolved he should for the present continue in his error, unless any unavoidable circumstance made it necessary to reveal it : and, to prevent a premature disclosure, he told his servant to take the phaeton to the inn at Dunstable, and there wait his arrival ; and mounting himself the man's horse,

struck

struck off the high road with Mr. Harrison towards Southill Grove.

After riding five or six miles in a very unpleasant country, they arrived at the house, the master of which, a plump, good-humoured, red-faced old gentleman, received Mr. Harrison with every mark of affection, and our hero with a friendly hospitality and frankness of manners, which always engages our good-will at the first sight.

When dinner was announced, Mr. Thornborough was introduced to a numerous circle, all of whom were at this time inmates of the house. As it will be necessary to speak of many of them with some degree of particularity, I will endeavour

deavour to mark their characters in as few words as possible.

Mr. Southill was a hearty old English squire, a race of beings now almost extinct; but he retained more of the original character than is usually met with. Hospitable to a degree, he was never happy but with a house full of company; and, though he had a very large family, lived to the utmost extent of a genteel fortune, without ever considering what provision ought to be made for them. He had a good understanding, but unpolished manners.

Mrs. Southill was in every respect the reverse of her husband, but having no kind of ascendancy over him, was obliged

obliged to yield in every point; and thus continually fretting at expences, which she knew not how to lessen, she was worn almost to the size of a thread-paper; and her pale thin face often made a droll contrast to his jolly red one. Naturally economical, this propensity was increased by having been bred up among fashionable people, by a sharp mother on a very small income, with some appearance of gentility. Thus her ideas were as refined as his were boisterous; but her understanding and judgment were both weak: and since she found it was impossible to make her husband retrench his expences, her only view now was to marry off her girls as she had been married herself, that is to a good fortune without any other

other consideration : and as she was convinced Mr. Southill would never live without company, she contrived often to invite young men, whom she thought most likely to take off some of her incumbrances. Mr. Harrison she had for some time had her eye on for Susan, the third daughter : and there was a gentleman at this time in the house of the name of Raymond, who, though twenty-five years her senior, she fancied would be a very good match for Harriet, the second, then about nineteen. The eldest, as we shall soon see, was, in her opinion at least, amply provided for. There were three daughters still younger ; one of them grown up, the others great girls ; and four sons at this time absent, either at school or college.

The

The young ladies were all handsome, and had received what is called polite educations ; but, some inheriting the father's and some the mother's disposition, and some having a mixture of both, there was a great variety in this family. Harriet and Mary-Anne taking after their father, all the elegance and decorum practised in those polite seminaries for female instruction, had not been able to conquer their propensity for mirth, and their love for what is vulgarly called fun : and these two placing themselves at dinner on each side of our hero, soon lost the restraint which a first acquaintance generally gives to young women, and presently convinced him of their real disposition, by loud bursts of laughter without any wit. The first jest

they actually practised, was fastening his coat to the worked-muslin gown of a young lady, who sat next Mary-Anne ; but, on her finding some pretence for removing soon after dinner, our hero drew his chair nearer to her, as her countenance promised more intelligence and more real refinement than any of the rest of the party ; and Mary-Anne took this opportunity of effecting her design.

The consequences were as might be expected. Our hero rising in a hurry, at an exclamation of Harriet's, who had also left her seat, tore across a whole breadth of miss Deloraine's gown, in such a manner as to spoil it entirely. The poor girl, who was not more than sixteen,

teen, and in a situation of life that could ill afford to replace this misfortune, burst into tears; but smiling at the same time, and begging Mr. Thornborough not to be distressed, as it was but a trifle, left the room hastily, and went up stairs.

When the confusion this accident had occasioned was a little abated, our hero found the fragment of muslin was fastened to his coat with a pin; and instantly guessing the whole, conceived a violent dislike against the perpetrators of so cruel a jest, and determined to replace it as soon as possible to the fair sufferer.

During the time of dinner, all the

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leisure

leisure his pretty tormentors would allow, Mr. Thornborough devoted to observing the countenances, and developing the characters, of all around him. Harrison was seated next to miss Susan; and it would be difficult to say which of the two appeared the best pleased with their situation: nor was this satisfaction lost upon Mrs. Southill; she sent many "a side-long glance" to that part of the table, which always brought back comfortable intelligence to her maternal feelings. Indeed there was something in this young lady more congenial to the sentiments of our hero, than any other of the Southill family. Lively, but not rude; polished, but not affected; her behaviour and conversation seemed to
spring

spring from an ingenuous mind, uncorrupted by art, and gentle by nature.

Mr. Southill, with a loud laugh, often rallied his daughters upon knowing how to feat themselves by the young fellows; and cautioned the gentlemen to take care of their hearts, or else the girls would get at them. Several speeches of this kind, and some still coarser, only excited ha! ha's! from all but the eldest and miss Susan: but the difference was this; the former looked angry, and the latter distrest. Yet this apparent fatisfaction was not general; Mrs. Southill, who knew our hero could not marry more than one of her daughters, was vexed that Harriet had left her old admirer, Mr. Raymond.

This gentleman was a widower ; the early part of his life had been devoted to trade ; but having by a lucky stroke secured a handsome independence, and his health being unequal to any exertions, he forsook the measure for the quill, and now devoted his leisure hours to the Muses : but a naturally gloomy disposition, heightened by illness, rendered his pieces as heavy from the subjects, which were always complaints, as they were insipid from his want of capacity to write better. Dull poems in long lines, descanting on the dissipation of the age, and arraigning its follies, were his usual compositions ; which nobody read, even once, but those who had some knowledge of the author, from curiosity ; and they never had or deserved
a second

a second perusal. His conversation was in the same style: the weather was never so bad, provisions so dear, or the state of the kingdom so terrifying, as at the present period; and the taxes so enormous, that they considerably decreased the property of the individual, yet lessened not the national debt. These were his common subjects; and his opinion delivered in a tone so solemn, so fretful, and so wearisome, that it was little to be wondered at that the laughter-loving Harriet preferred the sprightlier conversation of our hero; who, though not entirely sensible of the cause, was much amused by the pains the old lady took to keep the poet in good humour, by soothing and flattery.

When miss Deloraine left the table in consequence of the misfortune which had happened to her gown, Mr. Thornborough, though innocent in fact, lamented the accident in such strong terms, that an elderly lady who sat opposite to him begged he would not mention it, as it was not worth a thought.

“The girl,” added she, “is n’t nobody of rank or fortune, only a little *poterjay* of mine, that I took for a companion out of compassion. Her father was a captain in the navy, and when he was dead, all was gone with him; and so Kitty must have gone to service, but for my goodness to her; and captain Deloraine’s wife was only my husband’s first cousin: so you see, sir, I was not obliged to keep her

at

at all; only I thought 'twould be a great piece of charity, and might save her from falling into wicked ways, and the like."

"Has the captain been dead long?" asked our hero.

"Oh no, only seven months; and she came to me from Camden-House, where she was *edecated* like the first lady in the land, I warrant you. But madam's pride is come down a little since, I think; for I make her do all my needle work, and keep my accounts, and all that sort of thing: so she saves me a servant."

"Aye, and 'tis fit she should," cried

D 5

Mrs.

Mrs. Southill; "such a good relation as you are indeed to keep her from starving, or worse perhaps."

"But what do you think," continued Mrs. Medway, addressing our hero, "of her airs the other day? Truly, miss wanted to wear her mourning a twelve-month, because she loved her father so well: she said 'twas n't respectful to put on colours so soon. Why, you old-fashioned thing! says I, nobody does that now: besides, her black gown was worn out; and, as I was at all the expence, I did not choose to give her another."

This curious harangue fully impressed upon the mind of our hero the characters of this charitable lady, and her lit-

the protégée; and he determined to shew the latter every respect in his power, and, if possible, rescue her from her illiberal-minded relation, by forming some plan for her future subsistence.

Miss Southill now excited his attention, by raising her voice above its usual pitch, and speaking with great vehemence upon some subject that was started: it instantly struck him, that it was not unknown to him; and, in endeavouring to recollect where he had before seen her, he fixed his eyes on her face with so much earnestness, that she actually blushed; an event not common.

Her really beautiful face and fine person were obscured by the insolence and

ill-humour visible in every feature. She partook more of her mother than her father; but, though accomplished and polished, her sense was superficial, and she had a larger share of cunning than understanding; her memory was good, but her judgment weak. Cold, indolent, and unfeeling, she had yet the art to assume what character she pleased; and under the appearance of candour, generosity, and benevolence, had gained the affections of a young man of birth and fortune, in whom these qualities were genuine; and who, though possessing himself a large share of pride, mistook her insolence for high spirit, and her caprice for vivacity.

Our hero's endeavours to recollect
her

her were vain ; and, when the ladies retired to the drawing-room, he was as far as ever from the truth. But a circumstance soon after occurred that gave him a suspicion, which a few hours entirely confirmed.

C H A P. IV.

MOST of the gentlemen present being accustomed to harder drinking than our hero, he contrived to escape from thence, and went across the hall to seek the ladies; but not finding them in the drawing-room, and seeing the door of an apartment open, which appeared to be a library, he entered, and amused himself for some time with looking over the books, in hopes of finding something new. The collection was not a very large one, and consisted of such as are usually found in every family; and finding nothing among them which
parti-

particularly engaged his attention, was going to give up the pursuit, when his eyes were suddenly attracted by Rousseau's *Eloise*, in exactly the same binding as the odd volume he had so strangely become possessed of; and at the same time he observed that very volume was missing from this set; and, on the most minute examination, he could discover no difference, and was convinced it belonged to them. This conviction was followed by another: on opening the blank leaf in the first volume, he read the name of Arabella Southill; and was now no longer at a loss to guess where he had heard her voice.

Astonished at this discovery, he was for some time undetermined how to act:
his

his present name of Godfrey secured him from her suspicion; and at length he resolved to watch her narrowly, and observe if any circumstance confirmed this idea; but, at all events, to find an opportunity of speaking to her before he left Southill Grove; enquire if she knew Mr. Thornborough of Berkshire; and proceed, as her answer gave him reason or not to believe she was the same lady he had met with at Highford Mill.

He had scarcely formed this resolution, before he was interrupted by the entrance of miss Deloraine, who came in to replace a work-bag she had taken from the table. She started at seeing him; but, advancing to meet her, he took her hand, and leading her to the window,

window, again apologized for his awkwardness: and then, hesitating, begged to know how long she was to remain at Southill Grove.

“My stay here, sir,” returned she, “depends wholly upon Mrs. Medway: I am, at present, under her protection: indeed, I should be ungrateful, did I not acknowledge I owe to her my support.” She coloured, as she spoke this; and there was an expression in her countenance which betrayed the innate sensations she experienced.

“Forgive me, miss Deloraine, if I renew the grief you have so lately felt, by enquiring if you have no relations nearer, than Mrs. Medway, who might
be

be equally, or perhaps better calculated to soothe your afflictions, and contribute to your happiness."

"I have," returned she, with a sigh, "but one relation in the world, besides the lady in question; and to him I am wholly a stranger: nor does he, I dare believe, know such a person exists as myself. My father's half sister, her name Melbourne, married a Mr. Thornborough of Berkshire; but dying in a very few years, and my father having been stationed abroad during that time, no connection was ever kept up between the families. My aunt left two children: the elder I have heard died abroad; and the younger, who succeeded to the estate, is, I am told, a strange being, wholly

wholly devoted to study, and an absolute hermit. But, were he an angel, you know, sir, his youth, as well as my own, preclude every idea of my receiving pecuniary assistance from him. Mrs. Medway is, in fact, a worthy woman; though she has not that delicacy of sentiment which is so essential to soothe a mind weakened by distress and disappointment: yet in fact I am not, as you appear to suggest, unhappy; therefore, I beg you will not give way to this idea."

She concluded her speech with something like haughtiness and reserve; for it had just struck her, that she was guilty of an impropriety in thus telling her history to a stranger; and that stranger
young

young and handsome, and appearing to take an interest in her affairs that alarmed her : but her heart had been so softened by his tenderness, which immediately followed a very severe lecture from Mrs. Medway on her carelessness and extravagance (which her apprehensions of had caused her first agitation when this accident happened), that she knew not how to avoid giving him all the information he asked.

Mr. Thornborough was extremely delighted at this unexpected discovery ; and fancying he might trust her with a secret, which, for various reasons, it would now be particularly improper to make generally known, he again took her reluctant hand, and begging her to listen

to

to him for a few minutes, said—"Behold in me, my fair cousin, that eccentric being you have been taught to despise; but, believe me, you have mistaken my character. I was once what you described, but am now altered, and, I hope, not insensible either to the claims of relationship, or the more general, but scarcely less binding ties, by which all mankind are allied; and by which the unfortunate have an undoubted right to share the affluence of those whom Heaven has blest with its bounty, and who are therefore doubly bound to prove their gratitude by their justice; for benevolence is often too strong an expression for what is merely our duty."

Astonishment and pleasure denying
the

the poor girl the powers of utterance, he continued :

“ I see your amazement, and will hasten to clear up what must appear an inexplicable mystery. My name is not Godfrey, but Thornborough ; the former assumed for a purpose I may hereafter explain : but I must entreat, for reasons of the utmost consequence, that you do not at present mention my real name to any of this family, not excepting Mrs. Medway. My long absence in childhood from my own family, and my mother's early death, prevented my ever hearing enough of your father, the captain, to recollect the name, when Mrs. Medway mentioned it ; and you said truly, I knew not I had such a relation

lation as yourself in the world. Whilst you were speaking, it struck me that my uncle, Mr. Trevors, used sometimes, when I was a child, to tease me by saying, he would send me to sea with my uncle Deloraine; but his long absence, and the retired way in which I spent so many years, not only prevented our meeting, but made me forget even his existence. Did he die in England?"

"No, sir," returned miss Deloraine, "he married in America, and there remained from the time of his being on half pay. On my mother's death I was sent to England for education, and staid at Camden-House till my father died; and his fortune not turning out as it had been

been expected, Mrs. Medway, with whom I used to pass the holidays, took me home, and I have ever since lived with her."

"My age and unconnected state," returned our hero, "make it impossible for me to offer you an asylum till I am married; but I dare venture to hope it will not be very long before I am; and, in the mean time, I will render you independent. My mother's fortune, which was three thousand pounds, shall be settled on you. The estates I inherit from my father, and my uncle Trevors, are so considerable, that I could not miss this trifle: and I am sure, were my mother now alive, she would, at my request, leave that to her niece, which her son has no use for.

Therefore

Therefore consider it not, I beseech you, as an obligation ; it is merely a duty."

Miss Deloraine was so lost in grateful astonishment, that for a moment she appeared almost insensible : but, bursting into tears, she recovered her speech, and throwing herself involuntarily at his feet, attempted to express her feelings : but raising her, he entreated she would, if possible, command herself ; as, if any of the family interrupted them, it would be necessary to explain the cause of this apparent distress, and this explanation would bring on a discovery he must at this time avoid. He then again entreated her not to give any person reason to suppose she knew him : and having

faithfully promised secrecy, but in a voice almost inarticulate, she hurried up stairs, and left him delighted at having now so fair a plea for releasing a lovely and amiable young woman from so cruel a state of dependance.

He remained in the library, absorbed in reflection, till miss Harriet Southill entered, and, saying she had lost him, desired he would join the company in the drawing-room, whither he instantly attended her; after informing her he had only left it in consequence of its being empty, at the time he quitted the dining-parlour.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

DURING the time of our hero's tête-à-tête with miss Deloraine, Harriet and Mary-Anne had been laying a plan to divert themselves at his expence; in which, as soon as the gentlemen broke up, they solicited their father's assistance; who, loving nothing so well as a jest, readily promised all they asked; and calling the chamber-maid, gave orders accordingly, with a strict charge not to mention them to any of the family.

The house was a very large and old-fashioned mansion : the front had been modernized in the time of Mr. Southill's father ; but all the back part was ruinous, and almost falling to decay. At the end of a long gallery on the south side was a large room, now used as a laundry ; and, only divided from it by a lumber-closet, was a bed-chamber seldom occupied, except, when the house was full of company, by servants belonging to the guests. It was, however, still a decent apartment, and had been in former days a very handsome one. It was hung with tapestry, which, in some places, proved its antiquity by hanging in tatters ; and was in others so moth-eaten, that the figures were not always distinguishable. The chimney

was

was large and high, and without any grate; and broken fragments of carved figures, once representing some of the heathen deities, supported the sides, and continued from the mantle-piece to the ceiling. The bed, new when Queen Elizabeth reigned, was of purple damask, the colour in many places much changed, and the ornaments broken: it was made in the fashion of the times; and the other furniture in the room corresponded, for it had not been changed for many years. Cane chairs with high strait backs, and every thing similar, gave the whole such a gloomy appearance (which a large casement bow window, against which the wind often blew with violence, from its exposed situation, very much added to), that only

those, whose minds were wholly superior to every kind of fear, could enter it without feeling an impression of awe, which, if not terror, is at least a sensation of a very similar kind.

It was in this apartment the two young ladies I have mentioned designed to shew their talents, by attempting to frighten our hero: the room was admirably calculated for their purpose; and they had, for this reason, desired their father that it might be prepared for him, instead of the chamber Mrs. Southill had ordered. The maid, though surpris'd at this change, yet followed the directions given, without telling any of her fellow-servants; and soon made it as comfortable

comfortable as possible, by laying down carpets, and concealing as well as she could “the chinks which time had made.”

When Harriet had gained her point, she came in search of Mr. Thornborough; and finding him in the library, as has been already related, they went to join the rest of the company. After tea a dance was proposed, and agreed to. Our hero, though he wished to ask miss Deloraine, yet finding they were to change partners every two dances, made a sacrifice to propriety, and requested miss Southill's hand for the first two dances; and then engaged his fair cousin, to the regret and disappointment of Harriet and Mary-Anne, who hoped to

share him among themselves, and were not a little disconcerted at his second choice. Miss Southill not choosing to dance any more, at the end of the fourth he asked one of the younger girls, and to her and miss Deloraine devoted the rest of the evening. As some of the other ladies had so evidently sought his notice, he feared any particular attention to them might be misconstrued, and therefore purposely avoided it.

But, not easily repulsed, at supper, to which they sat down about half past ten, they renewed their attacks; and he answered them with so much pleasant vivacity, that insensibly they forgot their cause of anger, and rejoiced in the idea of the plan they had formed, and which they
hoped

hoped a few hours would now enable them to execute.

When the cloth was removed, a loud ringing at the gate surpris'd them all; and in a moment a young man entered with his hair disordered, and every mark of agitation in his countenance. After carelessly bowing to the company, and replying to Mr. Southill's jocular address, and Mrs. Southill's more studied expressions of joy, with equal indifference, he went up to Arabella, and saying something in a low voice, the glow on her cheeks, which at his first entrance had evidently proved her confusion, now increased so much as to be visible to the whole company. She answered him in a few words, in the same

tone; and he then took his seat between her and Mrs. Medway.

Mrs. Southill now ordered the supper to be brought back; but, in an accent that implied more impatience than gratitude, "I thank you," said he, "but I cannot eat—pray do not think of it." She renewed her entreaties, but in vain, till he was wearied, and he again refused in a peremptory manner; but, pouring out a glass of wine, drank it hastily without noticing any one; and then pushed the glass from him, as if to prevent any more solicitations.

The entrance of this stranger, and the wildness and haughtiness of his manner, appeared to strike a damp on the
whole

whole party, and to impress them with different but unpleasant sensations. Arabella was agitated, her father amazed, and Mrs. Southill confounded. Miss Deloraine was silent from natural timidity, and Mrs. Medway from not knowing what to say. Mr. Raymond was so much dismayed, that, had he followed the dictates of his heart, he would not have spoken a word: but his pride contending with this awe, soon conquered it; and he forced himself to talk, lest he should tacitly acknowledge his own inferiority. But Harrison's wonder could not subdue the strong impulse he always felt to join in conversation, whatever turn it took, and whether he was concerned in the subject or not. Mr. Thornborough was the only person in

company who felt neither curiosity nor awe: from the former his disposition was wholly exempt; and the latter he was prevented from feeling by an innate consciousness of his own situation in life, a real dignity of character, and firmness of mind: and, though wholly free from vanity, he could not acknowledge any gentleman enough his superior, to impress him with apprehension, or take from that ease and vivacity which ever distinguished his conversation: yet at this time, having nothing to call him forth, he felt no inclination to speak, but amused himself with the scene before him, and the variety of characters which were at once presented to his view. Mr. Harrison at last broke the general silence by addressing the stranger with,

“ Pray,

"Pray, fir, how did you find the roads?"

The other raised his eyes, and looking at him a moment, replied—"Much the same as usual, fir."

Not in the least daunted by this laconic answer, Harrison went on—"Did you come from London, fir?"

"No, fir."

"From the North, perhaps?"

The other looked at him with much surprise, made no reply at all, but began playing with a corkscrew, and seemed obstinately bent upon answering no more impertinent

impertinent questions. Mr. Harrison then, in a whisper, asked miss Susan who this great gentleman was.

“It is,” replied she, just loud enough for our hero to hear, “Mr. Wentworth Conway, eldest son of Mr. Conway, member for ——. He pays his addresses to Arabella : but what is the matter with him now I am sure I cannot tell, for I never saw him so odd before.”

Mr. Thornborough was surprised at this intelligence. He had often heard young Conway mentioned in very high terms, though he had never seen him ; and knew not how to account for his present mode of behaviour, so inconsistent with his general character.

Mr.

Mr. Raymond, though he felt affronted with Mr. Conway for the apparent contempt with which he regarded the company, yet in pity to them, and to appear himself of some importance, he resolved to keep up the conversation : but either not deigning or not daring to address the stranger, he pretended to answer Mr. Harrison.

“ Upon my word it is a shame, considering the amazing sums we pay at the turnpikes, that the commissioners of the roads do not see them properly applied. Nothing in nature can be worse than the road from L— to F— ; it is really quite terrifying. I am sure I had rather go across the country, in some parts of
the

the kingdom, than venture myself in a post-chaise in your neighbourhood."

"Well," cried Harrison, "for my part, I never think about them, so as I can but get from one place to another; though, hang it, I do not love water.—Godfrey, do you remember that evening I met you with the Barrymores?"

"Pray" (interrupted our hero, trembling with apprehension lest he should mention circumstances which might lead to a discovery) "have you heard of the Barrymores since they have been gone?"

"No," returned the other; but taking the hint, and being really too good-

good-humoured to wish to distress him in a strange company, he dropped the subject, and Mr. Raymond continued :

“ It is really surprising the higher powers do not take these matters into consideration ; but their whole time is engaged in dissipation. Cards and dice drive every thing else out of their heads, and they care not what the individual suffers. And then the administration of public justice is scandalously neglected. I dined last winter with a gentleman, who is in commission for the county ; and he made some poor wretches stand shivering in the hall till his rubber was decided. I declare it shocks my humanity, and injures my nerves, in such a manner, that I cannot stand it.

Mr.

Mr. Harrifon made some reply not worth recording ; and these two gentlemen divided between them all the general conversation that passed during the remainder of the evening : Mr. Conway now and then speaking in a low voice to miss Southill ; and sometimes answering her mother's civilities with a hasty " no," or " yes," as the subject required.

CHAP. VI.

WHEN they parted for the night, Mr. Southill attended our hero to his chamber; and then apologizing for its antiquity and dreary appearance, said it was the only one unoccupied, as the house was entirely full.

“But there is, my dear sir,” added he, “a circumstance which you ought to be apprised of, lest you should be alarmed. There are often strange noises heard here, for which no one can account; and the common people say it is haunted: nay, my gardener, who once
slept

slept here, declared he saw a man without a head standing by his bedside. But all these opinions are, perhaps, nothing but fancy ; though I will not take upon me to say there is no reason for them : however, be that as it may, you are too much a man of sense to have any fears of this kind ; and, to own the truth, I would not mention it before, lest it should appear like an excuse, and a wish to avoid receiving you."

"I thank you, sir," returned Mr. Thornborough, with a smile, "for your hint ; and, believe me, I feel no kind of apprehension. Without absolutely disbelieving supernatural appearances, I have no dread ; for I imagine not, like the vulgar, they are permitted
merely

merely to terrify the ignorant or superstitious ; though I am not sceptic enough to deny but they are sometimes allowed, on solemn or important occasions."

He then wished his kind host a good night, and fastened his door, that he might not be visited at least by the inhabitants of this world. He then looked round the room ; and though he could not say, with sir Harry Wildair, the ghost had chosen a very handsome apartment, he could not but allow it was a proper one. The high window, ceiling, and chimney; the broken carved work, and hideous tapestry figures, conspired to throw a gloom over it, which would have had an effect on a weak mind ; but his was superior to it. He
felt

felt no sensation but of curiosity; as he could not help fancying if he heard these noises, and could possibly discover the cause, he might disenchant the chamber, and lay the ghost: an exploit from which he thought he should derive some honour, and receive the thanks of the family for it.

To enable him the more easily to do this, he placed the candle in the chimney, and prepared to get into bed. This, however, was an adventure not so easily achieved: he found there was some obstacle to his repeated efforts; and in a few minutes discovered he had been favoured with what is called an apple-pye-bed; and was not long in guessing the contrivers of this scheme. He again dressed

dress'd himself, and with some trouble made the necessary alterations; and, whilst thus busily engaged, it struck him the devisers of this pretty frolic would not probably conclude with such a trifle, but had invented one of a more serious nature: in short, he had no doubt but the chamber was haunted only by the same fair spirits who had followed him so closely the whole day; and this opinion was strengthened by recollecting several circumstances. Mr. Conway, he was sure, slept in the house; and therefore there must be another chamber, which could not have been engaged previously. Mr. Southill's gravity, when he mentioned the ghost, had not the appearance of truth, though this had not struck him before; and a variety of other things

things now darted on his mind, that though singly of no importance, yet collectively assured him of the probability of his suspicions being well founded.

Full of this idea, and expecting every instant to be besieged, he resolved to prevent the incursions of the enemy, by keeping guard, and examining every place where the assault would most likely commence. His chamber door was locked, and he saw no other, nor any closet or cupboard; but, on examining the tapestry very strictly, he found *that* between the chimney and window was loose; and, on lifting it up, discovered a door that stood ajar, with neither lock, bolt, nor any kind of fastening, which

which opened into the large high closet before mentioned. Taking his candle, he went in, and saw it was filled with lumber of various kinds, old portinanteaus, boxes and baskets, and had another door leading to the gallery. It was here he supposed the entrance was to be made; and as it had no lock, he resolved to pile up some of the boxes against it, and sitting down there to wait the event, as he could by no means fasten the door under the tapestry, as it opened *from* his room.

Having settled this point and placed the boxes, he returned to his chamber, to leave the candle in the chimney; but having purposely had a very short piece put into the candlestick, it was almost

exhausted, and went quite out as he set it down; and he was now left without any light but what the faint rays of the moon, gleaming through the small panes of his bow window, afforded. This circumstance, however, he considered as of no consequence, as he had previously arranged every thing; and stealing softly back into the closet, he sat down and waited the event.

As the trunks were all empty, he knew they could make but a feeble resistance, if any force was used in pushing the door; but his only hope was to frighten the young ladies, by waiting their arrival, and shewing them he had discovered their intention, from ever attempting a similar frolic, which he thought.

thought might prove very hazardous, if the subject of it was not a man of principle as well as courage. In fact, their own danger would have been much greater than his, had he been capable of taking that advantage of their indiscretion the time and place would so well afford.

But Mr. Thornborough carried his ideas too far, when he supposed they meant to enter his chamber; their design was simply to open the door on their side of the tapestry, and through some of the apertures convey paper or pasteboard, on which various characters were to be written with phosphorus. In the mean time the other was to groan and make

different noises, to awaken him, and then engage his attention. As they were assured the secret of this door he could not discover, they did not suppose he would suspect them of being concerned; and consequently his astonishment and wonder would be raised, even if his fears were not excited; which, from the spirit he had in the course of the day frequently shewn, they thought too probable.

The apple-pye bed was, in fact, a trick practised unknown to them by the two youngest girls, who had the same enterprising genius, but from whose earlier years were not yet capable of achieving such a capital exploit as their sisters.

C H A P. VII.

THIS closet, it was before mentioned, divided the chamber our hero slept in from the laundry, and was only separated from the latter by a slight deal partition; and here Mr. Thornborough sat on a basket turned up, and waited with some impatience for the commencement of the action.

About a quarter of an hour after he had placed himself in this situation, he heard a light female footstep treading

F 3

softly

softly along the gallery, and immediately after saw a light in the laundry through the chinks. Another step, heavier but not louder, then struck his ear, and entered the same apartment. Not doubting but these were his pretty tormentors, he concluded their machinations were beginning, and exulted in the plan he had formed to counteract them.

A conversation was now begun in low voices, which grew gradually louder, till he distinctly heard the following dialogue, and discovered, to his infinite astonishment, the persons were no other than Wentworth Conway and Arabella Southill.

“ Yes,” cried the former, “ I again repeat,

repeat, you have either deceived me, or have been deceived yourself, or he is a villain: he utterly denies knowing any thing of the circumstance;—yet on reflection, from the confusion he was in when I asked him the question, I am inclined to think the guilt of deception lies with him alone; but the guilt of desertion is yours, nor can any thing excuse your conduct. Oh, Arabella! you know how steadily I meant to repair, as far as it was in my power, the crime of seduction you have laid to my charge. I thought my honour concerned; but now my heart revolts at the idea of uniting my fate with a woman, who has less tenderness than a savage, or even a brute. Contrary to my earnest request, to my strictest commands, disbelieving the so-

lemn promise I made, to meet you on the road, take away the child, and thus preserve your reputation unfullied (a measure, give me leave to say, necessary for both our sakes); you gave it to a stranger, and, as it has proved, a villain; for what he has done with the poor babe Heaven only knows, though his countenance proved him guilty; and you deceived me with a false story, that it was left with the nurse, too ill to be removed."

Arabella had wept without ceasing during this speech; but when he stopped, though her words were almost lost in her sobs, she replied,

"Upon my honour, Wentworth, I
told

told you only the truth, and the whole truth, when at our last meeting you taxed me with having deceived you; and I deceived you only from a fear that you would, if I confessed the reality, have made such an immediate search in the neighbourhood, as might have rendered me liable to suspicion. The guilty shrink from a shadow, and I was too well assured my residence at that little cottage had excited surprise and curiosity. The name of Thornborough I was not unacquainted with from your accounts of the family; therefore I the more readily committed it to his trust than I would to a stranger's, as knowing I could at any time reclaim it. In one point I acknowledge myself wrong, which I have never dared confess before.

Fearing he would not take it entirely, I told him to carry it to such a number in Fleet-street, where it would be received, and no questions asked ; fancying when it was refused there, as I was sure it would be, he would provide for it himself."

"You did !" returned he resentfully :
 "by Heaven, this exceeds the rest. Then he has left it among strangers, or perhaps sent it to the house without any enquiry, and it has possibly perished for want of that subsistence you not only, inhuman woman as you are, denied it yourself, but prevented my affording, by placing it in proper hands. I know Thornborough has acted wrong in some way, from his manner when I taxed him
 with

with it : but, however, his crimes will soon be atoned for ; the vengeance due to me for seduction and murder is now only beginning : yes, Arabella, murder. Thornborough lies now, as I have every reason to believe, dead, and by my hand. Convinced of your veracity, when he denied the charge, I told him he lied : we fought ; I was slightly wounded, but he fell. I left my servant to take care of the body, and bade him meet me at Dover. To-morrow, as soon as it is light, I leave the house. I am not safe in the kingdom ; he has powerful friends, who will revenge his death : you see me now perhaps for the last time. Could I bear your idea with me as I have done, glowing with tender sensibility, and with but one fault to counterbalance

F 6

your

your many fancied virtues, I should still dwell on your image with a delight that might compensate for the present anguish of my heart, and sooth the tedious hours of exile : but the delusion is over; you never loved me, or you could not have forsaken your child ; and I now from my soul believe your affection sprung only from ambition and avarice."

Arabella continued weeping with violence, and entreated him not to leave her.

" I must," returned he. " Would you have my life also fall a sacrifice to the pretended refinement of your sensibility, which

which leads your erring mind into a greater, to avoid a lesser evil?"

During this whole conversation our hero had been petrified with amazement. He dared not move, lest in the dead silence which reigned through the house they should hear him, and suppose he had been meanly listening to their discourse. Yet was he extremely perplexed what measures to take in making the discovery, which was become immediately necessary, from the circumstances he had just heard, lest Mr. Conway should, as he intended, leave Southill Grove before they could meet in the morning. Yet to break abruptly into the room at such a time, to confess he had heard a conversation which was totally destructive

tive of the lady's reputation, and himself a stranger to both, was a scheme he scarcely knew how to pursue, though he was sensible an explanation was absolutely essential.

Whilst he was hesitating, Mr. Conway finished his last speech, and all was for a moment silent. He then distinctly again heard the footsteps in the gallery; the light vanished in the laundry, the door burst open, something fell on the ground, loud screams succeeded from one or two voices, and one person ran screaming to the other end of the gallery, and loudly knocking at a chamber-door, several of the family were soon alarmed, and came running to the scene of confusion with lights, just as Mr. Thornborough,

Thornborough, who went round through the door of his own chamber, entered the laundry, where he saw Harriet extended on the floor, miss Southill leaning against the window, Mr. Conway assisting to lift Harriet on a seat, and the rest standing round, eagerly seeking that information which some were unable, and some unwilling to give.

The facts were these. When Harriet and Mary-Anne thought the house all quiet, they stole from their own chamber without a light, lest it should be seen, and proceeded to the laundry, where they had left the principal materials for their plot. Impressed with some awe from the darkness and silence of the night, and their own consciences reproaching

reproaching them for the part they were going to act, their minds were prepared to receive the least alarm. Whilst softly treading the gallery, at the farther end of which they slept, they each repented, but, ashamed to confess the terror they felt to each other, they went on trembling. Harriet was the first, and opening the laundry door, was struck with inconceivable terror on seeing a tall figure in white standing before the window, and at a little distance another in black. Miss Southill, on hearing the first noise, just as Mr. Conway had ceased speaking, put out the candle, lest the light should betray her to the person who passed by, and stood silent. The moon gave just light enough to shew her figure and Mr. Conway's, and their dress, to the
affrighted

affrighted Harriet : but unable to distinguish their features, nor indeed guessing it possible for any of the family to be in such a place at such a time, she conceived their intention of terrifying another had drawn down a judgment on themselves, and that these were really apparitions sent to punish them.

Impressed suddenly with this idea, she screamed violently on opening the door, and fell to the ground insensible. Mary-Anne, who followed close, saw something move over her sister's shoulder, and, when she screamed, concluding there was some terrible reason, though not well knowing what, ran back, echoing her cries, till she reached her father's door, and continued knocking
till

till he opened it, and then fell into an hysterical fit. Guessing something of the reality from knowing their design, he wrapped a night-gown round him, and leaving her mother to take care of her, Mr. Southill went to the laundry, where he found them situated as before described.

Nor was Arabella less alarmed at the apprehension of being herself discovered. Mr. Conway would have left the room, but could not in humanity desert either her or Harriet, who lay without sense or motion, till some one came to their assistance. When the family were collected, they applied drops and water, and other usual remedies; and as soon as they began to take effect, Mr. Southill desired
 she

she might be carried to her chamber; when Harrison, who, though rather in dishabille, had awoke at the first outcry, and came directly to know what was the matter, disturbed with the fear of not hearing the cause of this confusion, desired Mr. Southill would observe how extraordinary it was, that, summoned so hastily as they had all been from their beds, as was most probable, yet that Mr. Conway, Mr. Godfrey, and the two ladies, were all as well dressed as they had been the preceding evening. This startled him, and he begged, before any one left the room, he might hear what was the real reason.

Arabella was as unable to speak from apprehension, as Harriet from illness;
and

and Mr. Conway knew not what to say, or how to account for his presence. When Mr. Thornborough observing the general dismay, resolved to speak himself.

“As for me, Mr. Southill, you will not wonder at my being dressed, when I tell you the caution you gave me not to be frightened, added to some other circumstances, impressed my mind with an idea that some jest was intended, and I resolved to be upon the watch for my little aerial visitors. I discovered the door under the tapestry, and sat in the closet waiting their arrival, when the screams alarmed me, and I came round through my own room into this.”

“You

“ You sat in the closet ?” cried miss Southill, in an accent of terror; “ then,” looking at Mr. Conway, added in a low voice, “ we are discovered, and I am undone.”

“ Sir,” said Mr. Conway resentfully to our hero, “ I must before I leave the house have some conversation with you ; and trust you will give me satisfaction for behaviour, that, pardon me, was not like a gentleman.”

“ I meant,” replied he with equal spirit and coolness, “ to ask the same favour of you, Mr. Conway ; and I believe in our conversation I shall give you more real satisfaction than you expect, and such information as may render your
expedition

expedition to the continent unnecessary. In the mean time, madam," turning to miss Southill, and speaking low, "depend on my honour and my secrecy : yet I know no more with respect to yourself at present, than I knew yesterday afternoon."

"Perhaps, sir," returned Mr. Conway haughtily, "in the morning you may condescend to explain this mystery."

"Yes, sir, it is my intention ; and I hope you will stay to hear it. I would do it at this moment, but, for various reasons, it is neither a proper time nor place. Meet me at any hour in the garden, and you shall hear what I dare

venture to say will give you more pleasure than you expect."

The polite, yet intrepid manner in which he spoke, struck Mr. Conway; and he answered with more calmness.

Mr. Southill, who had been during this conversation soothing poor Harriet, and assuring her she had been frightened without reason, now demanded of his eldest daughter how she came there.

Arabella hesitating for an answer, Mr. Conway stepped forward, and said, "Sir, I will tell you. I have been engaged in a duel, and fear I must in consequence leave the kingdom; early to-morrow

tomorrow I mean to set out. For some reasons which I cannot declare before so many witnesses, it was necessary for me to see miss Southill alone, and she consented to meet me here. When miss Harriet came along the gallery, not knowing who it was, and fearing if the light was seen she might be discovered, she blew out the candle, and her sister entering, was terrified by seeing a figure standing by the window, and immediately fainted."

Mr. Southill shook his head, but not willing to speak before so many people, he only desired Arabella to return to her apartment; and ordering miss Susan and the maids to assist Harriet to hers, went himself to enquire for Mary-Anne ;
 who

who was better, and still more composed when she heard an explanation of the cause of their fright.

Mrs. Medway, on the first outcry, had bolted and barricaded her chamber-door, from an idea there were thieves; and in vain miss Deloraine begged she might go to the assistance of Mary-Anne, who she found was in hysterics, and left wholly to her mother's care, as the rest of the family had run to the scene of confusion. Regarding only her own safety, she resolutely refused; and was sufficiently punished for her inhumanity, from the terror she was in the whole night, from her uncertainty of the cause of this alarm.

The three gentlemen remained together in the laundry for some little time; Harrifon endeavouring to make our hero fully explain what he meant by saying he thought some jest was intended; but in vain: for it struck him, that the less that was said on the subject the better, for the young lady's sake. He then attempted to rally Mr. Conway, and enquired how miss Southill came to be taken for a ghost: but that gentleman haughtily replying it was no business of his, left the room, bowing to Mr. Thornborough, and adding, he should depend on his promise in the morning.

Harrifon, thus disappointed on all sides, soon followed, and our hero returned to
his

his apartment ; but, though he had lost all expectation of an aerial visitor, it was in vain he attempted to compose himself. The confirmation of his suspicions shocked, and the manner in which he should explain to Mr. Conway the change of his name and attendant circumstances, perplexed him : at length he resolved to wave all consideration for the Wildings, and all fears for himself, and candidly confess the whole truth, as far as related to himself, to the Southill family ; and let Harrison tell it at B—as he pleased : for the news he had just heard of Godfrey's probable death convinced him of the fatal consequences that had attended, and still might attend a continuance of the deception, and which nothing but a public avowal

on his side could counteract; as he had every reason to suppose, from Mr. Conway's relation, that Godfrey had still kept his name.

When this was determined, his mind grew easier; but he was grieved at the fatal event of a frolic to which he had consented, though he had not proposed it; and therefore thought himself in some measure accountable for it. Yet he acknowledged the moral justice of Godfrey's being punished by the very means he had taken to draw in his friend, and secure his own happiness.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

BEFORE I relate the conversation which passed between the gentlemen in the morning, I must revert to some previous circumstances, which it is necessary the readers should be acquainted with. The Conway family is already well known to them; I shall therefore only say, Wentworth was their son; but wholly independent of his father, from having had a large estate left him by an uncle, which he was to have possession of in a twelvemonth, at which period he would be of age; and, of course, was

G 3

perfectly

perfectly clear from the embarrassments attending his family, as his fortune was under the care of trustees, who would not permit the extravagance of the father to affect the son.

This young man was also superior in every point : he had the pride of his mother, without her insolence or arrogance ; the vivacity of his sisters, without their caprice or levity ; and, except when perplexed or disturbed, the general courtesy of his father, without his servility. Educated in the fashionable world, sensible of his independence, and meeting with no restraint, he had fallen into a variety of youthful excesses ; but preserving through the whole a strict sense of honour, he always lamented his want of perseverance

perseverance in that line of conduct which his own good understanding pointed out as rational and proper. In one of his college vacations, accident leading him to that part of the country, he became acquainted with the Southills; and the beauty of Arabella soon captivated a heart till then insensible of any serious impression. The delighted parents, knowing his rank and fortune, encouraged to the utmost an attachment which promised to raise their daughter to a sphere she had little reason to expect: but conscious of their own inferiority, and that the elder Mr. Conway's approbation could not be hoped for, they yielded to Wentworth's solicitations, that the engagement might be kept a profound secret; at the same

time they gave him a constant access to their house, and every opportunity of being with Arabella, in the idea of securing his affections more firmly. But, though they were at this time ignorant of the fatal consequences of their folly, their illiberal and selfish conduct had been fatally punished by the very measures they had pursued to accomplish their wishes. Without any intention of seduction on his side, the honour, the virtue of Arabella fell a sacrifice to the imprudence of her parents.

Proud, selfish, unfeeling, and without principle, whilst Wentworth for her sake bitterly lamented their lapse from virtue, *she* felt little regret, except what arose from a dread of the consequences,

which

which she had soon too much reason to fear would make her conduct known to the world. He would have married her instantly, but he had solemnly promised his father, who suspected this attachment, to make no engagement till he was of age; and he could not violate this oath, without acknowledging the cause, which would have destroyed the reputation of his future wife, and rendered her even more objectionable in the eyes of his own family than she already was.

Arabella declared, if some means were not taken to preserve her reputation, she would not live; nor would she consent even to acquaint her mother with her situation, and take her advice what steps

to follow. Half distracted by her violence, torn with self-reproaches, and dreading lest she should execute her terrible threats, and thus throw an additional load of guilt on his mind, he was for some time unable to fix on any plan : at length one suggested itself to him, and, on communicating it to Arabella, it had the good fortune to meet with her approbation ; and he set out to put it in immediate execution.

At F——m, a small town near the fens in Lincolnshire, lived the widow of a Mr. Milner, who had been under many pecuniary obligations to Wentworth Conway ; who now, from regard to his deceased friend, kept her eldest boy at school, and had promised in some way

to

to provide for him. To this lady, therefore, he applied for advice and assistance; and, as Arabella absolutely refused to entrust any friend of her own, acquainted her with the secret, and informed her of the scheme he had thought of, which she assented to and improved upon.

He gave her a handsome sum to provide every thing necessary for a genteel appearance, as her own income was very slender; and then took a lodging for her in the neighbourhood of Southill Grove, and introduced her by letter to the family, as a particular friend of his.

The bait took immediately. Mrs. Milner was courted, flattered, invited,

and almost idolized by all : but Mrs. Southill's civilities were the most marked, and the most ridiculous. Mrs. Milner often smiled at their attentions, from knowing their source ; but being really an amiable, sensible, and accomplished woman, continued, from pity, what she had consented to, from not knowing how to refuse the request of one to whom she was so much indebted. To Arabella she appeared the most attached, which was by her mother considered as an additional proof of Mr. Conway's serious intentions.

Wentworth was himself during this whole period with his father in Berkshire or London ; but he kept up a constant correspondence with Arabella,

to

to whom he imparted his plan ; told her Mrs. Milner knew every thing, and entreated, as the only means of saving her reputation, she would follow her advice on every point ; and to this she consented.

After a short stay in the neighbourhood, Mrs. Milner proposed returning home, and entreated Mr. Southill to permit his eldest daughter to accompany her for a few months, observing that change of air might be of service to her health, which had not been of late so good as usual : and Arabella's pale countenance and dejected spirits confirming this opinion, he very gladly complied with this lady's request ; and they set off for F——m, where miss Southill

was

was to stay as long as possible before her lying in. During that period some more retired spot was to be found; and for this purpose Mr. Conway set out on the search, and fixed on the cottage that has been mentioned before.

When she could no longer continue safely with Mrs. Milner, she wrote several letters to her family, and dated them forward, for her to send at different times; and then set out for her new habitation. Wentworth met her on the road, and assured her of his continued attachment, and the precautions he had taken, which, he doubted not, would secure her from any suspicions injurious to her character.

Before

Before she was brought to bed, she spent her time in fruitless repinings and angry self-reproaches, which sprang however not so much from penitence as mortification; and afterwards took so strong an aversion to the innocent infant, as seldom to bear it in her sight. When Mr. Conway visited her, which he only ventured to do once during her confinement, she told him of her intention to leave the child with the woman; a measure which he absolutely forbade, declaring it should be nursed under his own immediate eye; and already feeling the tenderness of a parent, was shocked at her proposal, as it must then be exposed to all the ill treatment which from common nurses is too frequently experienced,

and

and at a distance which precluded all enquiry from either of its parents.

He was positive, and Arabella obliged to submit ; yet she secretly determined to evade this command, if possible ; and he took leave, after settling the time and manner of her departure, and fixing the place where he would meet her to take the child away.

But a few days previous to that appointment, she received a letter from Mrs. Milner, directed by a feigned name, desiring her to send for a carriage, and set off instantly, as she had just learned from Mr. Conway, her father was coming to F— on purpose to fetch her home,
and

and should she be absent on his arrival, it might raise suspicion. A boy was that moment dispatched for a post-chaise, and she set off on that very afternoon of our hero's intended visit to sir James Wilmot. During the first few miles of her journey, she prayed earnestly some good charitable creature would take her child; and her wishes were now more reasonable, as Mrs. Milner, in her letter, had not again mentioned Wentworth's meeting her; but which that lady had only omitted, from an idea that it was not necessary to repeat it: Arabella therefore concluded, if any thing should prevent him, her father might discover what had been so carefully concealed, and this would be worse than any event that could possibly happen to her.

Her

Her mind was occupied in these terrible reflections, when Mr. Thornborough stopped the carriage, and assured her of the impossibility of passing the water. It then occurred to her, that if, in consequence of his obliging offers, he would take care of the child for a short time, it would extricate her from her present dilemma : but when he said his name was Thornborough, a name she had often heard Wentworth mention in terms of admiration and respect, a deeper scheme darted into her head, and she determined to part with it for ever, by giving him a false direction. She knew enough of his character, to be certain it would be safe under his protection ; and she was equally positive, should she ever be introduced to him as Mrs. W. Conway,

way, an event she thought highly probable, the present darkness would prevent him from recollecting her features, and she should therefore be secured from suspicion. Having settled her plan and acted accordingly, she drove off, rejoicing at her success, and only perplexed how to reconcile Conway to her breach of promise.

He was punctual to his appointment, and immediately enquiring for the child, she replied, it was then so ill with a disorder incident to young infants, but not dangerous in itself, that it was impossible to bring it but at the risk of its life. This account he was satisfied with, telling her, he should then go on directly to London, where his father wanted

wanted him on particular business, and as soon as he was at liberty return for the child, and put it to nurse near his own house in Buckinghamshire. Glad of this immediate reprieve, and hoping by that time to contrive some farther scheme, she suffered him to depart, and arrived herself in high spirits at F—m; told the same story to Mrs. Milner; and her father coming in the evening on the following day, she accompanied him back to Southill Grove.

The moment Wentworth could leave London, which was not till the day before our hero's release from his unjust confinement, he went down into Yorkshire, and going to the cottage demanded the infant. The woman, extremely surprised,

prised, told him the truth, and with such an air of simple ingenuousness, that he could not refuse her belief. From thence he went to Mrs. Milner, and, finding she knew nothing of the matter, was highly enraged at Arabella's duplicity and falsehood. He staid only one night at F——m, and set off instantly for Southill Grove. Arabella, who expected to see him before he went into Yorkshire, and had prepared another artful tale to deceive him, if possible, was extremely shocked when he taxed her with her unnatural conduct; and, unprepared with an excuse that would suit the present occasion, fell on her knees, and declared to whose care the child was entrusted, giving him those reasons which wore the best appearance; and

and declaring, she was the more strongly prompted to this action, by the fear of his not meeting her.

Though hurt at her insensibility, and irritated by the deception, he yet avoided all reproaches; and, as soon as he could, in civility to Mr. and Mrs. Southill, left the Grove; and having before heard from his sisters, that Mr. Thornborough was at B——, followed him to that place, not long after the grand discovery had been made, which separated the friends, and of course his enquiries after Mr. Thornborough were fruitless. At length he accidentally learned he was gone to N——; and taking a post-chaise instantly set out for that town, resolutely determined not to give over his search,

till

till he had found Mr. Thornborough, and obliged him to give an account of the child. What passed in their interview must, however, be delayed; whilst I inform my readers of Mr. Godfrey's present situation, and by what means he had obtained it.

C H A P. IX.

MISS Webster was the only child of a ship-builder at Hull, a man of low birth and connections, but who had acquired a considerable fortune; and at his death, which happened when she was only fourteen, she went to reside with his sister, who was married to an attorney at N——, who was left guardian to her person and fortune. She was a good humoured girl, at this time about eighteen, and had less pride and vanity than could be expected, considering her independance, and that she was considered as the first in the little circle in which

which she moved. Having never been at boarding school, she was totally without those refinements young ladies attain at those seminaries: but then she was free from art and affectation; and as she had a good person, pleasant countenance, and had learned dancing at Hull before her father's death, just enough to give her an air, she made no bad figure in a public room. She was, it is true, illiterate and uninformed to a degree; and rustic, but not vulgar in her manners.

Mr. Atkins had distant relations at B—— of the name of Collins; who, like miss Webster, were at the end of the polite line; and to them, under the care of Mrs. Atkins, Nancy Web-

ster was sent to see something of life. It happened one evening at an assembly, that Mr. Godfrey, disgusted with Charlotte's coldness, irritated at her refusing to dance with him, and almost in despair at the steadiness with which she continued to decline his proposals, saw miss Webster; and hearing an account of her fortune and situation, asked her to dance: and thinking, if Charlotte actually refused him, he had better turn his thoughts that way, behaved to her with so much studied attention, that the aunt and niece were equally captivated with him; and the former told him, if ever he came their way, they would be proud to see him. Mr. Godfrey bowed very low, and replied, they might depend on his availing

himself

himself of the honour of their obliging invitation, whenever it was in his power.

A day or two after this, Mrs. Atkins was summoned home, as one of her children was taken ill, and she could not leave Nancy behind for fear of fortune-hunters: but poor Nancy attended her very unwillingly; she was delighted with the gaieties of B—, and more than half tempted to believe, that, if she could stay long enough, she might make a conquest of Mr. Thornborough, whose conduct at the ball had flattered her extremely: however, she was obliged to submit, and departed without even seeing her partner again.

Mr. Godfrey, though in the army, had not chosen that profession from a love of fighting, but because there was no other so convenient to him; and his disposition was too peaceable to incline him to take any notice of Mr. Thornborough's letter, particularly as it instantly struck him, that, since that gentleman, from a point of delicacy to the Wildings, had determined not to mention the circumstances of their parting, he might take the liberty of his name for a short time, and in another place, without fear of a discovery; and by paying his addresses to, and marrying miss Webster, secure her fortune, which would be particularly acceptable to him, as, in spite of all Mr. Thornborough's liberality, he

was

was still deeply in debt, and only on half-pay.

He left B——, as has been already related; and parting with the servants about half way, proceeded to N——, where he paid a visit to the Atkins's immediately on his arrival; by whom, as well as by miss Webster, he was received with the highest cordiality and respect. He took the first opportunity of assuring the latter, his journey to N—— was wholly on her account; that he preferred her to all the women he had ever seen; and that, unless she consented to make him happy, he should be the most miserable wretch on earth.

Miss Webster was extremely pleased with this confession, and perfectly well disposed to admit him as a lover : nor were her uncle and aunt less delighted ; to the latter he had been well known at B—— by the name of Thornborough ; nor could she or her husband, to whom she mentioned the particulars of his family and fortune, form any idea of the imposture. But Mr. Atkins, willing to know more, wrote to a correspondent at Reading, desiring to be informed of the truth of these reports.

Mr. Johnson replied, Mr. Thornborough was a young man of the most unexceptionable character, possessed of a large unincumbered fortune, and of one of the best families in the county ;
that

that he had derived some peculiarities of opinion from a very retired habit of living; but which a better acquaintance with the world, to which he had been for many years totally a stranger, would, he doubted not, divest him of.

This letter according exactly with what Mr. Godfrey had told Mrs. Atkins, his addressee commenced, and were received in form. He said, the naiveté and simple attractions of miss Webster suited his feelings beyond all the fashionable qualities found in higher circles; and that for this reason he had quitted miss Wilding, whose soul was wholly uncongenial to his own.

Nancy Webster's artless affections

H 4

were

were soon so entirely his own, that he had little doubt of succeeding in the plan he had formed, which was to persuade her to elope with him; for he well knew, were they to be married at N—, her uncle would expect the settlements, &c. to be properly executed, and that he must produce writings, which unluckily were not in his possession. The simple girl was easily prevailed upon to give her consent to these clandestine measures; and the very day was fixed, when Mr. Conway arrived, and, fortunately for her, disconcerted the whole plan.

CHAP.

C H A P. X.

MR. Conway alighted at the King's Arms, and sending to Mr. Godfrey, who was visiting at Mr. Atkins's, desired to see him there on particular business. Mrs. Atkins hearing this message before it was taken into the parlour, in the profusion of her civility sent her compliments to the strange gentleman, and begged he would come to their house, where his friend was going to drink tea; and entering the parlour in a few minutes, told him, with an air of extreme self-satisfaction, what she had done.

Poor Godfrey received this intelligence with the utmost confusion and dismay; for he had too much reason to fear the arrival of any acquaintance of the real Mr. Thornborough's would be the total destruction of all his hopes and expectations; and starting up suddenly, said he could by no means think of such a liberty, and was leaving the room: but Mrs. Atkins's unpolished hospitality led her into absolute ill-breeding; for standing with her back to the door, she declared he should not go; that any friend of his was to the full as welcome as himself, and continued teasing him in this manner, till he was worked up to an agony of apprehension; when a loud knocking announcing the gentleman's arrival, he

he gave up the contest, and threw himself into a chair, in that kind of settled despair we feel when certain of the total destruction of our hopes, and which no exertions can avert.

He rose from his seat when Mr. Conway entered the room; and, not feeling the least surprise that he was totally unknown to him, advanced with the full expectation of hearing him utter some exclamation of astonishment, and at once disclaim his acquaintance, and treat him as an impostor: but how soon was his terror converted into joy, when Mr. Conway approaching with a bow, said,

“I trust, Mr. Thornborough, when

H 6

you

you know the reason of this visit, and how much my happiness is interested in the business which has brought me many miles to have the honour of a short conversation with you, you will pardon the intrusion of one, who, though till this moment a stranger to your person, has long had a perfect knowledge of your character."

Mr. Godfrey was scarcely able to answer him, for the delight with which his heart bounded, when he found his apprehensions thus suddenly removed. However, he commanded himself enough to reply, that whatever his motives were, his visit did him honour, and then begged to know his name.

"My

"My name," replied the other, "is Conway. My father has long had the pleasure of your acquaintance, though I have been unfortunately a stranger to you. But there is a little circumstance which I should be glad to mention to you alone," looking round at the family.

Mr. Godfrey then desiring they might go into the other parlour, Mrs. Atkins answered, "No, indeed, we will go ourselves, and leave this to you. Come, Nancy."

The door was then shut, and Godfrey desired Mr. Conway would take a chair, mentally exclaiming with Charles in the Busy Body, "Pray Heaven this little circum-

circumstance may not spoil all!" Mr. Conway then began.

"I have, sir, many obligations to you, for your humanity to the lady and child you lately met on the road; and now entreat you will add to them, by informing me where the child is, that I may release you from a troublesome charge, and take it under my own care."

Godfrey now coloured violently, as, from his entire ignorance of the affair, he was sure he must be discovered: he, however, hesitatingly replied, to gain farther time, and, if possible, more information on the subject,

"What

“What lady, sir; what child do you mean?”

Mr. Conway imagining at first this hesitation proceeded from a point of delicacy, which made him fearful of revealing the secret to a stranger, mildly answered, “I see, Mr. Thornborough, your motives for avoiding a direct reply, and I honour you for them: but give me leave to remove your suspicions, that I am not authorised to make this enquiry, by assuring you, I came from the lady herself; and to convince you I really did, I will tell you what a person unconcerned could not be acquainted with—that you met this lady near Highford Mill; you cautioned her against going through
the

the water, and offered to take care of the child ; an offer which she thankfully accepted : but I very much fear you must have thought the infant entirely thrown on your hands, it is so long since the circumstance happened : but the truth is, having been detained in town by business, and only having seen the lady a few days ago, she then informed me of what I was before ignorant, that it was consigned to your care, and I came immediately in search of you."

Here he paused ; and Godfrey finding by this speech, that, though the real Mr. Thornborough was undoubtedly concerned, Mr. Conway had no other proof than the report of a lady, determined

terminated steadily to deny any knowledge of it; and if he doubted his word, refer him back to her, as if the mistake was on her side; and by these means gain time to effect his present purpose, before an eclaircissement took place. He therefore replied, but with a variation of countenance which none but the most hardened in guilt can always avoid, that he knew nothing at all of the affair; that the lady was certainly in an error with respect to his name; he had never crossed Highford Water: in short, that it was a mistake from the beginning to the end.

Mr. Conway imputing his embarrassment to a wrong cause, answered
sternly,

sternly, "It is no mistake, sir : the name of Thornborough she knew as well as myself ; and it was that which induced her to trust you with a charge I now find you were unworthy of, since you so infamously deny it. Why you deny it is best known to yourself ; but, by Heaven, as I can depend upon her veracity, as well as on my own, I say you are a liar."

Mr. Godfrey now saw he must either fight or confess ; and fully determined not to do the latter, the former it was impossible to avoid. He replied, "This language, sir, demands an apology, or instant satisfaction."

"You shall have what satisfaction
you

you please," returned Mr. Conway: "follow me to the King's Arms."

The other, however little he liked the idea of a duel, was now enraged; and mistaking the effects of anger for courage, followed boldly. They left the house, and Mr. Conway ordering his servant to bring his pistols, and saddle his horse, led to an obscure place, where they could fight without observation.

Very high words now passed between them, and they fired almost at the same instant: Godfrey's bullet only grazed his adversary's neck; but *he* received one in his side, and fell instantly.

Conway

Conway now knew no time was to be lost; he mounted his horse, and ordering his servant to call a surgeon, and see that every care was taken of the wounded man, bade him then come to him at Dunstable, where he would meet him to learn in what state the wound was, and whether there were any hopes of his recovery. He then rode off, and reached Southill Grove at the time before mentioned. He would not trust himself to speak of the duel before so many; he therefore only whispered to Arabella, that he was now come probably for the last time; that he must set off at break of day, and desired half an hour's private conversation before she went to bed, to explain the apparent mystery of his conduct.

What

What then passed, and how they were interrupted, the reader is already acquainted with : I shall therefore proceed to the next morning, after informing them that Godfrey's wound, though dangerous, was not mortal. The Atkins's, extremely alarmed on his account, took him to their own house, and attended him with all possible care. They wished to inform his friends of his situation : but this he positively refused, asserting he would not have the duel known for very particular reasons ; and finding he grew gradually better, they assented, though unwillingly.

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

MR. Conway rose early in the morning, and sending a message to our hero, he joined him instantly in the garden, and thinking it right to speak first, he began in the following manner.

“After what I accidentally overheard last night, Mr. Conway, it would be affectation in me to pretend ignorance : but when I tell you my real name is Thornborough, and that I am well acquainted with your family, I think you will not doubt my honour when I declare, I will never make an unfair use of the knowledge I have gained.”

“Thornborough !”

“Thornborough!” repeated Wentworth, with the utmost astonishment. “Are you really Mr. Thornborough of Berkshire? Whom then have I wounded? A man innocent of the charge; and should he die, my impetuosity has for ever robbed me of my peace! Why did I not believe his assertions? Alas, sir, your intelligence has shewn me the folly, as well as the crime, of duelling, and is a fatal proof that, when blinded, as I was, by passion, we rush unguardedly on destruction.”

“The man whom you wounded,” replied Mr. Thornborough calmly, “was, indeed, innocent of the offence you imputed to him; but he was guilty of deceit and treachery in
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the highest degree ; and it is the justice of Heaven which has overtaken him. His name is really the one which I now bear, and by which only you knew me. We changed names in a frolic, that, but for a fortunate discovery, might have ended fatally for my happiness. I then re-assumed my own ; but from a ridiculous point of delicacy to characters unworthy such consideration, and an apprehension I ought to be above, when I met Mr. Harrison yesterday, who had only known me as Godfrey, I suffered him to continue in his mistake, and introduce me as such to this family. The particulars of these events I will give you and them at large, when we meet at breakfast : but let me

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hasten to relieve your mind from all anxiety with respect to the child : it is at nurse, but under the immediate eye of my own housekeeper, who is a very worthy woman : and the last accounts I had from her were such as must afford you satisfaction. But as it is well taken care of, permit me to say, you had better let it remain where it now is for some time ; this will make miss Southill easy, and you will be spared the trouble of finding a proper situation."

" I thank you most sincerely," returned young Conway, " for your humanity and attention ; and, relieved as my mind now is by this assurance, I will implicitly follow your advice. The principal uneasiness I felt, was at the

idea of its being abandoned by both its parents, and perhaps exposed to unceasing calamity ; but, secured from this apprehension, I am now easy. As to your hint respecting miss Southill, I do not wish to add to her regrets, and shall rejoice in any circumstance that will lessen them ; but never, never will I vow at the altar to love and honour a woman whose deceit and barbarity have excited my contempt and aversion. Perhaps, sir, you may think I am actuated by other motives to despise her ; but you are in an error : faulty as her conduct was in one respect, it was nothing to this. Though the world might not have forgiven the first, I should ; and it was as much my intention as it was my duty, to make her every atonement in my power.

power.—But that is all at an end : I will give her half my fortune if she requires it, but I will never marry her; and upon the child I will make such a settlement as will secure it all the comforts of life, even should I make another connection, which at present I feel little inclined to believe possible.”

Here he stopped, being too much agitated to proceed : after a few minutes, however, he again addressed our hero, and begged to know who this Godfrey was, and how he came still to assume his name.

“ That,” replied he, “ I mean to investigate ; and, if I hear he is likely to recover, will go myself to him, and learn

his motive: he is already sufficiently punished; perhaps he may now see his errors, and reform."

Mr. Conway then related all the particulars respecting his attachment to Arabella, which have been mentioned; and concluded by saying, if our hero would accompany him to Dunstable after breakfast, where he thought by that time his servant was arrived, they might learn the true state of Godfrey's health, and proceed accordingly.

Mr. Thornborough consented, and then, in return for his confidence, gave him the particulars of his acquaintance with his deceitful friend, and the whole of his conduct; and Mr. Conway joined
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in his opinion, that, for the sake of his own character, and those who might in future be misled by the error, he ought at once to confess the whole.

The breakfast-bell now ringing, they walked back to the house, mutually pleased with each other; and our hero determined, when the morning's repast was ended, to acknowledge the name of Thornborough, and avow the motives which had hitherto prompted his concealment. They found all the company assembled in the parlour, except Arabella, Harriet, and Mary-Anne, who were too ill, from the confusion of the preceding night, to join the party.

When the usual compliments had

been paid and received, " I am sorry," said Mr. Raymond with his usual solemnity, " to hear the young ladies are indisposed. Pray, madam, if I may take the liberty of asking, what was the real cause of the violent uproar, which reached even my apartment ?"

" Why, sir," returned Mrs. Southill, extremely unwilling to own the truth, lest it should lessen his good opinion of Harriet, " you must know Arabella was very ill, and Harriet coming to my room to fetch some drops, was frightened by something in the gallery, and screaming out terrified Mary-Anne, who was with her, into fits : and so, sir, the house you see was alarmed ; but that was all, I assure you."

" Umph !"

“Umph!” cried he. “I am sorry for the young lady, indeed; vastly sorry;” smiling at the same time at Mr. Harrifon, who, unfortunately for Mrs. Southill’s veracity, had told him as much of the truth as he knew himself, and that being enough to convince him they had intended to frighten somebody, he felt a little terrified lest he should be the next victim, and determined to leave the house that very morning; having resolved, at all events, not to pay his addresses to miss Harriet, not being sure but such a frolicksome young lady might contrive to shew him in the glass a tall meagre figure, with a wide mouth and a large pair of horns; and this, whether a figure conjured up by the force of imagination, a disembodied spirit, or the

real representation of a corporeal being, would have been equally disagreeable to him : however, he said not a word of his intention at present, reserving that and some of his reasons for a tête-à-tête with Mrs. Southill.

C H A P. XII.

WHEN the tea things were removed, Mr. Conway desired Mr. Southill to know that gentleman (pointing to our hero) in future by the name of Thornborough. Surprise was visible in every countenance; but Mr. Harrison could scarcely believe his senses.

“Thornborough!” cried he. “Why then I suppose you are that gentleman’s brother, who was with you at B——?”

“No,” replied he; “but I will in-

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stantly

stantly explain the apparent mystery of my conduct, if you will listen to me."

The whole company were very willing to hear the story ; but none more so than Harrison, who sat in mute astonishment whilst our hero related the events which had happened at B—, and his reasons for not fulfilling his promise to the Wildings, which all present thought sufficiently justifiable.

When he had concluded, Harrison shook him by the hand, and declared he was very glad he had the estate instead of the other ; and added in a low voice, " Miss Barrymore was certainly a witch when she gave you so evidently the preference."

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Our hero sighed at the mention of a name so dear to him ; and the company proceeding to declare their various opinions on the subject, he took miss Deloraine's hand, and said this discovery was now become more essential, as he had yesterday the happiness of finding in that young lady a relation, to whom he was before a stranger, but whom it would now be ever his pride and pleasure to acknowledge. Then turning to Mrs. Medway, in a lower voice, he thanked her for her past kindness to his cousin ; adding, it was now become his duty to bestow on her that independence which, had his mother lived, she would have been entitled to ; but that he hoped she would continue for the present to afford her that countenance and protection

which his situation prevented him from offering.

Mrs. Medway's countenance, which had before been clouded, now brightened up: she made vast encomiums on her young charge, and so highly extolled his intended generosity, he was obliged to go to the other side of the table. He had since his intercourse with the world gained some experience, and justly supposed miss Deloraine's independence would secure to her better treatment from Mrs. Medway; from whom however he determined to remove her, whenever he could find a better situation; sensible that her vulgarity and ill breeding rendered her a very ineligible companion
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for a young person just entering into life.

The instant our hero ended his relation, Susan Southill ran up stairs to acquaint her three sisters, who were breakfasting together, with this strange event. Arabella was now no longer at a loss to guess the meaning of our hero's speech to Mr. Conway ; but, shocked at the idea of being discovered by a stranger, she burst into tears, and retired to her own apartment, fretfully refusing Mary-Anne's offered assistance ; and the other girls continued to chat over the occurrences of the last two days. Harriet and Mary-Anne had been so thoroughly terrified the night before, they were quite cured of their propensity for frolics,

lics, and forswore every thing of the kind.

In the mean time, Mr. Raymond desiring a private audience with Mrs. Southill, begged she would not think him guilty of a breach of decorum in taking so abrupt a leave ; but that, having altered his intentions with respect to miss Harriet, he thought it was the best method he could take.

“ And pray, sir,” demanded the angry mother, “ why have you altered your intentions ? I should be glad to know your motives.”

“ It is not at all necessary for me, madam, to explain my reasons ; let it suffice,

suffice, enough of the transactions of last night have transpired, to deter me from any farther thoughts of a connection with this family."

"What, sir! do you dare say my daughter has acted in any way unbecoming the dignity of virtue?"

"I dare say nothing, madam: far be it from me to wish to asperse the young lady's character: I only repeat, it will not suit me to continue at Southill Grove, with a view of courting miss Harriet; and I shall, therefore, take my leave this morning, wishing you all possible happiness."

He then quitted the room, and Mrs.
Southill,

Southill, in the utmost dismay, went in search of her husband, whom, however, she could not find.

During this conference, Mr. Conway sent a message to Arabella, and was admitted to the dressing-room. After enquiring for her health, with a coldness she was unaccustomed to, he began by telling her, what she knew before, that it was Mr. Thornborough who had heard their conversation; and then continued :

“ Sorry as I am to hurt your feelings, I must again repeat, we meet now for the last time : the reason for this I told you last night. Were I to marry you, I should be the most miserable wretch
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on earth, from an entire want of confidence in you, which your past conduct, I am sorry to add, too well justifies : nor could I with these sentiments render you more happy. Make what demand on my fortune you think proper, and I will gladly comply with it : depend also on my providing handsomely for that little unfortunate being you so cruelly deserted : but Mr. Thornborough has taken care of it. Yet, do not think, Arabella, though I would scorn even to give the world the most distant reason to guess the cause of our separation, that I will, from your own family, bear the stigma of undeserved reproach. Your fame was as dear to me as my own, till you forfeited my affections by your inhumanity : but it shall still be sacred ; only

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to your father (and to him I must, for my own sake) will I reveal the truth."

She had hitherto listened to him with tolerable composure ; but now she burst forth into the bitterest reproaches, which had in them so much more of resentment than tenderness, that it only served to confirm him in his purpose : but leaving her in haste, lest his heart should relent, he went to Mr. Southill, and telling him he was going away that morning, desired to speak with him in his study.

Mr. Southill was struck with his agitation, though far from guessing the cause ; but when he informed him of the whole story, of his intention of leaving
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ing the Grove, and his reasons, the poor man was stupified with grief and horror. He had not before entertained an idea of the dishonour of his child ; and the apprehensions of what she would suffer, when acquainted with his intentions, added to his own feelings. Yet, though rough and unpolished, he had a good understanding, and was perfectly sensible of the justice and propriety of Mr. Conway's behaviour, whilst he lamented the consequences of his own folly and imprudence. He very generously disclaimed all his offers respecting his fortune, declaring nothing could atone for the anguish he felt ; yet he must allow Mr. Conway's reasons were justifiable.

They conversed on this subject for
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some time longer, and then parted. Wentworth, without seeing any other part of the family, ordered his horse, and was joined by our hero, who had been employed in taking leave of the ladies, and they set out together for Dunstable. Mr. Southill had been too much agitated by his late conversation to see the latter, but sent his excuses.

Mr. Harrison was no sooner informed of their departure, than he determined to follow, and go on directly for B——, promising however his fair Susanna to return in a short time. Mr. Raymond was already gone; and the family at Southill Grove, thus deserted, felt the contrast of the preceding day very severely. Several of them were involved
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in deep affliction, some perplexed and half disconcerted, two only well pleased and delighted. In the first class we may reckon Mr. and Mrs. Southill and Arabella: in the second, Mrs. Medway and Harriet; the former not knowing whether her avarice was most gratified in the assurance of being relieved from an incumbrance, or her pride most hurt at losing a dependant, on whom she could vent all her spleen and ill-humour: and Harriet, though she always disliked Mr. Raymond, and was disgusted with his attentions, was yet mortified that he should leave her from so slight a cause. But Susan had real reason to rejoice: Mr. Harrison had in a most unequivocal manner offered her his hand and fortune, and assured her of his speedy return:

turn : and Kitty Deloraine felt the utmost gratitude to Heaven, for the prospect she now enjoyed of a release from a state of dependance, extremely irksome to an ingenuous mind. Mary-Anne's good spirits soon conquered her alarms and regrets : but Fanny and Betsey, the two youngest girls, were the only part of the family whose minds remained in exactly the same state they had been in for some time past.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.